

LESSON PLAN
Department of Human Services
PARENTING TIME

FOSTER CARE
CFSR-PIP Parenting Time Stand Alone Module
DHS and Private Agency
08/09/05

Suggestions to Instructor	Reference	Content
<p>Equipment recommended: Dry Erase Board or Flip Chart; markers.</p> <p>Instructor Note: Before the training begins, print out copies of the policy CFF 722-6 (pages 7 – 11) for each participant. Provide copies of the policy material to each participant at the beginning of the training.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Workers will understand:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Who is entitled to parenting time.2) How often parenting time is to occur.		<p style="text-align: center;">PARENTING TIME</p>

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<p>3) Where parenting time should take place.</p> <p>4) The importance of parenting time.</p> <p>5) The difference between supervised and unsupervised parenting time.</p> <p>6) Legal rights of grandparents when it comes to visitation.</p> <p>7) How and when parenting time gets suspended.</p> <p>Workers will be able to:</p> <p>1) Develop a parenting time plan.</p>		<p>INTRODUCTION:</p> <p>Today we are going to discuss visitations, particularly visitation between parents and their children. Visits between parents and the child are often referred to as “parenting time”. We will begin our discussion today by talking about parenting time.</p>

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<p>Instructor note: Use a flip chart or a dry erase board to write answers. Use the headings: Parent, Child, Foster Parent and Worker. Place the responses under the appropriate heading.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">?</p>	<p>Parenting time is NOT an earned privilege for the parent OR the child. Parenting time is a LEGAL RIGHT, unless otherwise suspended or terminated by the court, which we will discuss later. So, unless the worker has an order that says DO NOT provide parenting time, it is a requirement for the families we work with.</p> <p>Besides the fact that it is legally required, why else do you think parenting time is important for the individuals involved in the case?</p> <p>Parent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To let them know their child is okay.• For them to let their children know what their plan for reunification is (this may vary from county to county).

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For them to maintain and strengthen their relationship with their child. • To demonstrate and practice new parenting skills. <p>Child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing the parent lets the child know that the parent is okay. • It assures the child that the parent does care about the child. • If the child is old enough, it allows the child an opportunity to find out what the parent is doing toward reunification. <p>Foster Parent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps the placement in perspective for the foster parent. It reminds them that the goal for the child is to return home with their families. • They are able to observe the relationship between the parent and child. <p>Worker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows the worker to observe and assess the relationship and attachment between parent and child. • Allows the worker to assess the progress of the parent's

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		<p>ability to adequately parent their child and safeguard the child's wellbeing.</p> <p>Now that we have discussed the importance of parenting time, let's talk about the minimum guidelines for establishing parenting time.</p> <p>The first visit between parent and child must be offered within the first week of the child's placement and at least weekly after that. Frequent contact between the parent and child is especially important when the child first enters care. The frequency of parenting time prior to the dispositional hearing is an important factor in determining how quickly children can be reunited with their families, when reunification is the plan.</p> <p>The Juvenile Code requires that continued parenting time must be offered no less than every seven days after the dispositional</p>

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		<p>hearing, unless clearly documented as harmful to the child.</p> <p>This means that the worker is to provide weekly parenting time</p> <p>for every parent with a legal right to the child, regardless of prior custody. If the non-removal parent had established visitation prior to the removal, these visits should be continued accordingly unless there are new factors that would negatively impact the child.</p> <p>It is important to engage the family in establishing and scheduling parenting time. Issues pertaining to a schedule of parenting time must be discussed with the parent. An agreement needs to be reached regarding a parenting time schedule between the worker and the parent. The primary consideration in scheduling parenting time is the parents' time commitments, which may include employment or mandated</p>

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		<p>service requirements. The supervising agency is to institute a flexible schedule to provide a number of hours outside of the traditional workday to accommodate the schedules of the individuals involved. Barriers to parenting time are to be identified and, where possible, resolved. The factors that might affect parenting time must be identified and evaluated. These factors could include the situation of the parent, the agency, the foster home/kinship caregiver, or the safety of the child. The location, length, and frequency of parenting time, as well as the action steps for achieving the parenting time standard must be documented as part of the Parent-Agency Treatment Plan and Service Agreement.</p> <p>Further, policy clearly states in CFF 722-6 pages 10 and 11 that staff are to utilize the following guidelines in developing a</p>
	CFF 722-6 pages	

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	10 & 11	<p>parenting time plan with the parent(s):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A child and parent shall be offered parenting time within the first week of placement and at least weekly thereafter. If the child is very young, parenting time should be more frequent. 2. When the plan is to return the child home, the standard scheduling for parenting time is to increase and to allow unsupervised parenting time and to allow unsupervised parenting time in the parental home. 3. At the time a child is placed in a foster care setting, the supervising agency worker must discuss with the parents the critical importance of parenting time with the child. Parents should also be reminded that parenting time is a good indicator of an early reunification of the family unit and the likely positive and negative consequences of parenting time. 4. The separation of a child from a parent is traumatic. A child may regress behaviorally or act out in anger against

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		<p>the parent and others. Parents may view this as a betrayal by the child and may also express anger toward the system. You should assist the parent and child in understanding their grief as a common reaction to the stress of removal.</p> <p>5. The worker should assist foster parents and kinship caregivers in understanding the child's reaction to parenting time. This will help them to understand that many times the child's aggressive behavior is not directed at them but is a reflection of the loss that the child is feeling.</p> <p>6. The worker and the parents must work together to identify the needs of the child that should be met during parenting time, which will display the changes in parenting necessary for reunification. These changes must be behaviorally specific, developmentally appropriate and documented in the Parent-Agency Treatment Plan.</p> <p>7. When the Court orders parenting time to be supervised, case aides, foster parents and others may supervise</p>

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<p>Instructor Note: The list of responses provided is not intended to be all-inclusive. Each office will have different resources available and each trainee will have different views. The importance of this exercise is to get your staff thinking about</p>	<p>?</p>	<p>visits. The worker must be sufficiently present to be able to monitor and assess in home parenting time between a parent and the child. The worker should be able to testify in court regarding the interaction between the parent and the child. Parenting time supervisors are to be aware of the expectations of the parent during parenting time and are to facilitate and encourage appropriate behaviors during parenting time.</p> <p>Now let's talk about where visits should occur. All visits should take place in a child and family friendly setting conducive to normal interaction between the child and parent. Exceptions to this must be approved by a first line supervisor.</p> <p>Can anyone give me an example of what you would consider a "child and family friendly setting conducive to normal interaction between the child and parent"?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent's home • Relative's home • Friend of the parent's home • Park

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the issues of “child and family friendly” and “normal interaction”. It is good to encourage staff to think outside the box.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurant with a play area • Mall • Local Office if there is a room that is furnished comfortably <p>Having the visits occur in a place outside of your office may be less intimidating to the parent and child involved. Parenting time could take place within the parent and child’s support system or in a public place (home, relative’s home, church, etc).</p> <p>One thing to keep in mind when determining where to have the visits is that supervised means supervised. Only the court can authorize supervised parenting time, and when it does, that means the parent is not to be alone with the child. Unless stated otherwise, all visits are unsupervised. But when they are supervised, the worker needs to keep in mind that s/he is to arrange for that. That doesn’t mean that a relative or case aide</p>

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		<p>can't supervise the visit, it just means that the worker needs to ensure that someone is doing the supervising and that the worker is present during enough of the visits to support his/her recommendations to the court about future visits and goals for the family. It also means that everyone involved knows what the expectations of the visiting schedule are, including when and where the visits occur, who is allowed to attend and what behavior is considered appropriate by the child and the adults.</p> <p>Another thing to remember when scheduling parenting time is that Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN) checks must be conducted on all adult household members and non-parent adults when a child will be having parenting time within a parent's home. Per policy CFF 722-6 pages 8 and 9, <u>unless ordered by the court</u>, children may not have parenting time or be placed within the home of a parent, if any adult household</p>
	CFF 722-6 pages	

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<p>Instructor Note: Write the crimes down on your flip chart or dry erase board. This will help staff remember which crimes require a court order for parenting time reasons.</p>	<p>8 & 9</p>	<p>member or non-parent adult has a conviction for one of the following crimes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child abuse/neglect • spousal abuse • a crime against children (including pornography) • a crime involving violence, rape, sexual assault, or homicide but not including other physical assaults or battery <p>If the results of the LEIN check reveal that a member of the household has a conviction within the last five years for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical assault • battery, or • a drug related offense <p>this information must be assessed to determine whether there are safety issues that must be addressed.</p>

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		<p>So, this brings us to the topic of who should be considered for visitation with the children. As we discussed earlier, parenting time is provided for every parent with a legal right to the child, regardless of prior custody. But who else should be considered? You may have case where the children lived in the same home as their grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, other relatives or close family friends. It is expected that children may have established healthy relationships with non-parent adults. They may feel loss and trauma from the separation from people who are not legally their parents. In some situations, the child's loss may be just as traumatic from an individual who is not a parent. So, it is best practice to consider all persons important in the child's life. If the child is old enough, ask them who they miss and wish to see. Do a full assessment of the support system that the child has already established for him or herself.</p>

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<p>Instructor Note: Again, this list is not meant to be all-inclusive. Each office will have specific barriers. Some of the barriers are not within DHS's control. This is a good time to discuss barriers and how to address them, when possible. Your staff may have very creative ways of scheduling parenting time for others to benefit the child.</p>	<p>?</p>	<p>Whenever possible, give the child an opportunity to have visits with people that the child has developed an attachment to....this could include relatives, teachers, etc. Remember, look at what is in the best interests of the child!! Unfortunately, we all know there are barriers to having this occur as much as we would like.</p> <p>Can anyone tell me what some of those barriers are?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • location of visit • if the visits need to be supervised • worker safety (you may not have as much information about certain persons when you do your assessment and schedule visits) • child safety (same reasons as for worker safety) • time constraints - not enough time in the day to fit it all in • lacking visitation aides to help with transportation or supervising

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		<p>If visits are not able to take place with non-parents, other means of contact should be considered. This could include phone calls, letters, and e-mail.</p> <p>Keep in mind, when assessing who should be included for parenting time, grandparents have certain rights available to them that other non-parent adults do not.</p> <p>Public Act 524 of 2004 establishes grandparent's ability to seek a grandparenting time order under certain circumstances. It also establishes guidelines regarding who is eligible to request such an order and under what conditions, while keeping the best interest of the child in mind.</p>

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		<p>Grandparent's can seek grandparenting time if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the grandchild's parents are divorced, in the process of divorce, separation, or annulment.• The grandchild's parent is deceased and is the son/daughter of the grandparent.• The grandchild's parents have never been married, are not cohabitating, and the father's paternity has been established.• The child is placed outside the home OR legal custody of the child has been given to someone other than a parent <p>Within the year prior to seeking grandparenting time, the grandparent provided an established custodial environment for the grandchild.</p> <p>Now let's talk about the content and quality of the parenting</p>

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<p>Instructor Note: Again, this list is not meant to be all-inclusive. Your staff may have other areas that they assess that are not on this list.</p>	<p>?</p>	<p>time. We will also discuss the worker's role in this process. We discussed earlier the importance of scheduling the parenting time with the parent and letting them know what is expected of them. But what does that mean? Simply put, it means that you need to be up front with the parent and let them know what you are looking for when you do your parenting time assessment.</p> <p>Can anyone give me an example of what you look at during your overall assessment of parenting time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attendance and punctuality • how the parent greets the child • affection shown between parent and child • parent's interaction with the child • parent's attitude toward the child • child's response to the parent before, during and after the visit • how a child is disciplined or redirected during parenting time

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		<p>It is also important for the worker to debrief with the parent after the visit. If the worker is transporting the children or there is no time to talk about it directly after the visit, the worker should set aside some time to call or meet with the parent to discuss the visit. In situations where this can't be done every week, it is a very important topic to discuss when the worker meets with the parent during required monthly visits. A worker cannot expect a parent to improve a situation that they are not aware exists. Also, it is good for parents to hear when they are making progress. It helps to motivate the parent to continue to participate with all areas of their treatment plan when they know the worker is giving them credit for the things they are doing.</p> <p>Another thing the worker can do to encourage parenting time is to be supportive of the parent. No one likes to be talked down</p>

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<p>Instructor Note: Write the responses on your flip chart or dry erase board. Again, this list is not meant to be all-inclusive.</p>	<p>?</p>	<p>to, be demoralized or humiliated, or to feel like they have lost control of their life. The parents we work with are no different. So, be strength-based and solution-focused when discussing parenting time.</p> <p>Now, can anyone give some activities that would encourage interaction between the parent and the child?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading to the child • holding the child • playing with the child appropriately for the child's age and development • asking the child about school • playing games <p>So, let's say that the parent has followed the worker's recommendations and parenting time is going well. What is next? This is the time when the worker assesses the possibility of extending parenting time. During this assessment the worker</p>

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		<p>should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the parent's recognition of their role and responsibility in the neglect or abuse,• their ability to assure the safety of the child during the parenting time, including the environment where the visit will be taking place,• the attachment between the child and the parent, and• the parent's use of positive parenting techniques. <p>If the worker determines that it would be safe for the child, parenting time should be extended. There is no formula that requires when or how this is to take place, except to say that the worker needs to make a full assessment of safety for the child and look at what is in the child's best interest. Keep in mind that if the plan is reunification, extending parenting time should occur prior to a child being returned home. This allows for the parent, child and the child's caregiver to prepare</p>

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		<p>themselves for the return. And it allows the worker to make a better assessment of the parent's ability to provide care for their child in a safe environment.</p> <p>Unfortunately, there are situations where a parent does not make sufficient progress. It may be harmful to the child to not only extend parenting time, but to participate in parenting time at all. A court order is required to suspend parenting time. This is not a discretionary decision to be made by anyone but the court. This is not a decision that is made as a form of punishment to the child for not behaving or to the parent for not complying with the treatment plan. Parents are also not to be denied parenting time because of their inability to pay for transportation to the visit. Remember, unless otherwise ordered by the court, the Juvenile Code requires that parents be</p>

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		<p>provided with parenting time no less than every seven days after the dispositional hearing. So, unless the worker has a court order suspending visits, s/he is required to provide them to the family.</p> <p>The court may suspend parenting time in two situations. The first is when the court determines that parenting time is harmful to the child, even if supervised. In this situation the court will order the suspension of parenting time while counseling or a psychological evaluation is being conducted and until ordered by the court. This means that even if the parent or child has complied with counseling or the psychological evaluation, the worker is not to reinstate parenting time until the court orders it.</p> <p>The second situation in which parenting time could be suspended is when a termination petition is filed. In this event,</p>

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		parenting time is automatically suspended at the time the petition to terminate parental rights is filed. It remains suspended until the court has reached a decision on the request to terminate parental rights. The court can continue parenting time, if the court makes a determination that parenting time will not harm the child. If the court is considering continuation of parenting time, the parent must provide evidence as to why parenting time is not harmful to the child. If being considered by the court, caseworkers are also to present information to the court, which either gives factual basis for continuing parenting time or the factual basis to suspend parenting time. But remember, only the court can make that decision and in the event that the parent does not request continued parenting time, the visits are suspended automatically at the time the petition to terminate parental rights is filed with the court.


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<p>Supplemental Exercise: You may choose to have you staff complete this exercise to demonstrate their knowledge of negotiating and documenting parenting time with families. Staff can use a case they are currently working on or you may wish to have them use the provided scenario. This can be done within the context of your session, or you may wish to have staff bring the exercise to you upon completion.</p>		<p>Okay, now that we have fully discussed what is expected in scheduling, monitoring and documenting parenting time, let's do a practice exercise. You can use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a case you are currently working on• or a sample scenario that has been developed <p>to complete this exercise.</p> <p>What I would like you to do is document:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) how you negotiated the parenting time schedule with the parent(s) to meet their needs,2) where the visits occur,3) what type of environment the visit is taking place in,4) if visits are supervised or unsupervised,5) if supervised – who is supervising,6) what do you expect from the parent(s) during the visits,

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		7) what have you observed during parenting time,
		8) progress of the parent(s) during parenting time,
		9) who is attending scheduled parenting time,
		10) what your discussions have been with the parent(s) in regard to parenting time,
		11) and what your recommendations for parenting time are for the next quarter.